



CHRISTCHURCH CHAMBER CHAT

Issue 9 - August 2023

Bridge Health & Wellbeing shortlisted in Dorset Business Awards 2023

Family-run Bridge Health & Wellbeing is delighted to have been shortlisted for the Dorset Business Awards 2023 in the Best New Business category.

Organised by Dorset Chamber, the Dorset Business Awards are being held this year for the first time since 2019. Entries were open to businesses across the county and were judged against the criteria for the category by an independent panel of experts. The judges were extremely impressed by the calibre and quality of the entries that showcased the wonderful businesses operating in the county.

Ian Girling, chief executive of Dorset Chamber, commented, "Each entry for the Dorset Business Awards tells a unique story of the commitment, dedication and focus of businesses from all sectors across the county. We've seen innovative startups, SMEs demonstrating impressive scaling, and companies delivering thought-leading operational excellence. Entrants have shown true dedication to the customer experience and are creating great places for people to work."

The New Business Award celebrates the growth and success of a business that has started in the last five years. Husband and wife Paul and Louise O'Connell opened the doors to their bespoke health and wellbeing clinic in July 2019. Paul, an experienced physiotherapist and Louise, a body control Pilates teacher, dreamt of creating their own health and wellbeing business to offer physiotherapy treatment and Pilates classes from the same space, providing a joined-up approach to client care, all in a family atmosphere.

Paul & Louise O'Connell, founders of Bridge Health & Wellbeing, said, "It's been a dramatic first few years for our business, but we are so proud of everything we have achieved. We have survived covid and come out the other side still believing in our unique, integrated approach to health and wellbeing. We are incredibly proud to be shortlisted alongside some brilliant businesses from Christchurch and beyond. We wish all the finalists good luck and look forward to celebrating the best of Dorset business at the Awards night."

The winners will be announced at the Dorset Business Festival Awards Gala Dinner on 12 October at the Hilton Hotel in Bournemouth.

It's already been an award-winning year for Bridge Health & Wellbeing, which won Outstanding Business of the Year at the Christchurch Business Awards 2023. The company also won the GHP Private Healthcare Awards in 2022, the SME News Magazine Southern Enterprise Awards in 2021, and was runner up in the Family Business of the Year Awards 2021.

From their state-of-the-art clinic on Bridge Steet, Christchurch, Bridge Health & Wellbeing provides physiotherapy, chiropractic, sports massage and rehabilitation services, and Pilates, yoga, and other wellbeing classes. To find out more or book your appointment, visit www.bridgehw.com, call 01202 473800, or email info@bridgehw.com.



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Free business support and grants

Free business support and match-funded grants are currently available for BCP based SMEs through BCP Council's [UK Shared Prosperity Fund](#) (UKSPF) allocation. Over 150 local businesses have already benefited from the scheme with over £120,000 in grant funding issued since its launch earlier this year.

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is a central pillar of the UK government's Levelling Up agenda and provides £2.6 billion of funding for local investment by March 2025. The Fund aims to improve pride in place and increase life chances across the UK investing in communities and place, supporting local business, and people and skills.

The government has allocated £4.2 million for investment in communities across Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole.

More information is available on the GOV.UK website.

BCP Economic Development Supporting Business (EDSB)

The Economic Development team at BCP Council is proud to support business through the UKSPF and help them to succeed with this funding allocation. The Investment Plan sets aside a budget of £2.5 million to support the local business economy in the following areas:

- start-up and growth
- exporting
- research and development and innovation
- decarbonisation and improving the natural environment
- town and district centres
- development and promotion of the visitor economy.

Eligible businesses

Your business's sole or main place of business must be an address within Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole in order to be eligible to apply for support from the UKSPF.

Businesses are encouraged to register for the support whilst the UKSPF funding remains available.



President's thoughts

This summer's weather has been somewhat unpredictable, so I was delighted when the rain stayed away from this year's Carnival event, which has been a staple of the Christchurch calendar for so long now.

As a visitor of course, this was good news, and for town centre businesses this was another event that attracted much-needed footfall over the two day event. It also was certainly a relief for all the volunteers involved that all their hard work was rewarded with a hugely successful, well attended event.

We sometimes take for granted the huge role volunteers play in our community. The Carnival couldn't happen without all the folk who give up their time to organise it, publicise it, marshal the road closures, liaise with all the performers, and so on. The same can be said for Stomping on the Quomps, another Christchurch favourite. Sadly this event was not so fortunate with the weather this year, although at the time of writing a date in September is hoped for.

We owe huge debts of thanks, too, to the volunteers who help run the Regent Centre and Red House Museum, two of the jewels in Christchurch's crown. Then there are the charity shops, of course, all of whom have volunteers to keep the wheels turning. Speaking of charity, Christchurch is home to a number of organisations who do some terrific work, almost exclusively run by volunteers.

Finally, I should mention that both your Chamber and the Business Improvement District (BID) board rely on volunteers time and effort. Thank you to all these folk and to any I have not had space to mention - Christchurch really wouldn't be the same without you!

Andy Barfield

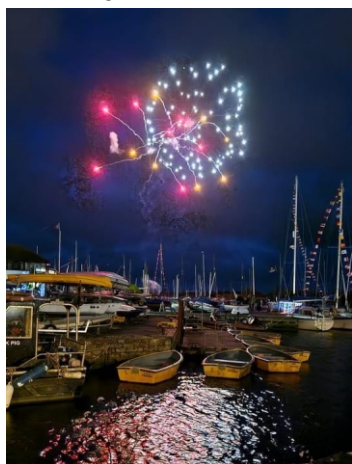
President Christchurch Chamber of Trade and Commerce

Gotcha's Pantry open for business

This summer has brought a new shop to Bargates in the form of "Gotcha's Pantry", a family run business offering Romanian food and drink.

Both brother and sister go by the nickname "Gotcha" - they joke that it's easier for English speakers to remember one name for both of them than their birth names. They've both lived in Christchurch for many years now, and having seen the success of other Eastern European food stores decided Christchurch was ready for what they self-deprecatingly call "Just Another Romanian Food Shop."

They stock an interesting and diverse selection of food and drink, and are open from 9am until early evening. Next time you're strolling down Bargates, pop in, say hello and pick up a little something!



Can you help our Carnival in 2024?

We were very lucky this year with the Christchurch Carnival to catch a good weather window in the middle of some rather wet periods, so we were delighted that everything could go ahead as planned, including the parade and the wonderful fireworks.

The carnival is a great community event which has been going, I believe, since around 1896. This year we had more children's entertainment such as Punch and Judy, a children's DJ and the appearance of Bluey on the field. The headline act of Platinum Queen was excellent, very popular, and filled the field with people singing and dancing.

The Carnival Committee is small and entirely voluntary. We operate on a shoestring, the whole event costs around £13,000 to stage, largely due to the many free performers during the day but the infrastructure costs are going up substantially including the boring, but essential, costs of security, first aid, stage hire, insurance, toilets and fencing. The largest cost is the fireworks. This year we have just about broken even, but only because we did not have to pay for the fireworks last year as they were cancelled due to the heat and fire risk and the payments could be carried over to this year.

This year our only local business supporters financially were Cookes, Aster Homes, Frettons and Slades estate agents.

I fully realise that many local businesses are struggling, but this is a request to you all, if you value your carnival, we would really appreciate some more local support and we would most certainly give you a lot of promotion in return. A few businesses offering £500 each would make a tremendous difference!

Viv Charrett
Christchurch Town Mayor and Chair of the Carnival Committee

Have your say

We would like your thoughts on BCP Council's draft **vision, priorities** and **objectives** ...

Consultation closes 11.59pm **22 October** 2023

Residents and stakeholders are encouraged to feedback on a new vision and priorities for the council in a public consultation.

The consultation invites everyone to share their ideas on how to develop a place where nature, coast, communities and towns come together to create a healthy and sustainable environment in which we all can thrive.

These suggestions will be used to inform a final plan that will be presented to Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council's Cabinet in December and to Full Council in January.

There are several ways residents can take part:

- Engage with the online survey and share views on the draft vision, priorities and objectives, suggest changes and highlight anything they feel has been missed at haveyoursay.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/our-vision
- Pin their thoughts to a digital ideas wall and share their story about what it's like for them living in the area.
- Visit one of the busy locations where the council will be holding roadshows and meeting with partners. At these events people across the three towns will have an opportunity to talk to council officers, share their stories in person and fill out the survey.
- Complete a paper copy of the survey at any BCP Council library.

Residents have until 22 October to complete the survey and submit their ideas, which will inform a refresh of the Council's Corporate Strategy.

More information – including updates to new roadshow dates - can be found at the survey's homepage: haveyoursay.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/our-vision

Tourism Update

Whilst June was blossoming, July was a real dampener and all hospitality business suffered with the poor weather and there was a real downturn in visitors to the area. Sadly, Stompin' on the Quomps and the New Forest Food Festival were both cancelled due to high winds and rain.

By the time you read this article we will have enjoyed a glorious August and will be preparing to enjoy and Indian Summer (I do hope that I am right!).

As mentioned in a previous article the budgets have been cut for local authorities and BCP council have been honest in saying that several major events will not happen next year, with the Air Festival in serious doubt. The motto of the council will change as their vision has to be that residents are looked after first and foremost, the aim of new council leader Vicki Slade.

Given this unfortunate situation hospitality businesses (Hotels in particular) have been discussing the way forward and it seems that this could involve the introduction of a tourism levy which will be paid for by visitors across all the hotels in Bournemouth and Poole. The idea is to charge £1 per bedroom night and this will raise considerable funds to offset lost revenue and will be controlled through the Town Centre and Coastal BID's. It will be known as HBID (Hospitality BID) You may have read about this in another way as there was talk of introducing a bed tax across the UK but that didn't come into fruition. The scheme being looked at is already running in Manchester and Liverpool. (Since April 2023).

It is forecast that this scheme could potentially raise £3.3million which will help fund tourism marketing, support cultural events, support sustainability, and enhance visitor experiences. At this time of HBID development Christchurch BID is not in the mix but we can only benefit from what happens across tourism in Bournemouth.

Sadly, we have suffered another year of poor coach management in Christchurch with visitors suffering due to poor signage, a difficult drop off point and basically no communication! Coaches have been stuck trying to access Mayor's Mead Car Park (Off Wick Lane) which used to house the coaches before the spaces were realigned to accommodate cars. Coach drivers are now forced to leave Christchurch and make their way to the Cliff top car park in Highcliffe which is now the designated waiting area as the temporary fix, near two riversmeet leisure centre, didn't work. Council officers are aware of the problems and have assured us that a recommendation for change is forthcoming, but we must wait with bated breath as we cannot go through yet another year of the same. It reflects very badly on us as a tourist destination and visitor attraction and will take Christchurch off the map.

Congratulations go to the team at The Kings Arms Christchurch who have been awarded four stars by the AA with merit. This is great news as Christchurch now boasts three four-star hotels!



Great news from BCP tourism that our tourism websites have had over 656,000 visitors and 1.4million page views. #lovechristchurch had a 188,000 reach and 13000 engagements (In comparison #lovebournemouth had an 8.5 million reach with 663,930 engagements)

The new slogan to replace "Coast with the most" is likely to be "Year of the Coast", this is currently under review.

Article prepared by Tim Lloyd – MD Captain's Club Hotel and Vice President Chamber of Trade

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Castles...a Christchurch institution

Joseph Castle established Castles Ironmongers in 1922, it quickly becoming a renowned Ironmongers and Hardware shop known for its courteous and efficient customer service. Roger Mason, whom many of you will know, joined his father (who started as an apprentice) in 1969 and between them developed the iconic and legendary Castles Home Hardware.

Being regulars in the shop ourselves, Gary, my partner, grabbed the opportunity to buy the business with both hands! Maintaining the 'heart' of the shop was always paramount for us and that included still selling nuts, bolts, screws, etc individually, not overly changing the layout (or smell!) and most importantly continuing with the attentive, friendly, knowledgeable help and advice that our customers expect. Our tag-line is 'traditional service, modern solutions'.

We expanded the range of stock in the shop to include the latest innovations in DIY, decorating, cleaning and tools and worked hard to become one of the biggest stockists of Calor gas in the area. We attracted many more tradespeople and account holders, listened to their requirements and expanded our stock range accordingly. Castles even sourced and provided the specialist hardware and door furniture for the new toilets in Saxon Square! We weathered the COVID lockdown and deemed 'an essential business' allowed to remain trading, we sold vast amounts of compost, seeds and gardening items; our home delivery service was bursting at the seams! Our Facebook page was also created at this time and has a large following. As a result of the change in subsequent shopping habits we developed our website www.castleshomeware.com, it was a labour of love putting (most of) our 16,750 stock items on it!

With our wide range of Calor gas, seasonal goods and the look and feel of a 'bygone era', Castles has also become somewhat of a 'tourist destination'. We get visitors from far and wide who are amazed when they step in and reminisce with us their memories of similar shops in their childhood. We still get the "4 candles" line too!

We've successfully developed and grown our home & property maintenance division, Castles Home Maintenance, now employing a team of multi-skilled tradespeople. We carry out all types of repairs, DIY and improvements for our customers along with big projects for housing associations, estate agents, insurance companies and more. This is run from the Castles office where we have Brian our Estimator/Project Manager and Margaret, our Operations and Finance Manager.

However, life is not all roses ... the roadworks over the previous 2 years impacted our footfall immensely and we narrowly avoided having to make redundancies in the shop. More shops and businesses have closed in Christchurch High Street and Bargates, making the out of town retail parks more appealing.

We need people and business to continue to support our "legendary Hardware store" and in doing so also maintain a very important part of the history of Christchurch.

Castles Home Hardware: 01202 484844

Castles Home Maintenance: 01202 038990

Nicky Watson



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Business Awards hat-trick success for Avon Marina

The Christchurch Business Awards returned for their second year, welcoming more than fifty business executives and owners to Hoburne Park. The awards are designed to promote and celebrate local businesses and their commercial prowess.

Avon Marina, a family-run business nestled on the picturesque banks of the River Avon, achieved super success at the awards attaining an incredible triple win!

This remarkable achievement includes being awarded Best Place to Work, Family Business of the Year, and Overall Business of the Year. These accolades not only recognise the team's dedication and hard work but also reflect their commitment to creating a positive and thriving work environment in such a stunning location.

The awards were received by Operations Director, Karen Smith and Sales & Marketing Manager, Crispin Lennox. "Thank you once again to everyone who has supported us throughout this journey, from acquisition to now. We are thrilled to have achieved this triple win and we look forward to continuing our mission of providing exceptional service while making a positive impact in our community" – Karen Smith.

The marina, previously known as Rossiters Boatyard, was acquired by Avon Marina in 2019 and has since undergone major improvements boasting several dedicated departments including Boat sales, Marina Services, Engineering, Brokerage, a Chandlery & Lifestyle store, Fuel Dock and our latest offering, a riverside café - The Galley @ Avon Marina.

With a vision for growth and innovation, Avon Marina is eagerly looking forward to further developing their site, creating a welcoming environment for visitors and locals alike.



Award winning bodyshop colours you happy for three decades

It was Henry T Ford who famously said you could buy his firm's cars in any colour you wanted...as long as it's black. Kustom Kolors, based in Airfield Road with over 30 years experience, would beg to differ.

Colin and his team take care of anything from a bumper scuff to a full restoration. They've worked on an amazing range of vehicles including classics, customs, hot rods, bikes, tuk-tuks and even planes. Based in Christchurch, Dorset, Kustom Kolors are one of the south's best reputed body shops. No job is too big or too small, from crash repairs, minor dents to full restorations and custom paint detailing. Colin reckons he prefers another of Henry Ford's mottos - "Don't find fault, find a remedy."

Contact Colin and his team on 01202 480801 or go to www.kustomkolors.co.uk

Chamber social at the Bear of Burton

The Chamber is delighted that the Bear of Burton has very kindly offered their lovely library to us for our new regular monthly social event, appropriately titled the Chamber Social, with the first being on Thursday 5th October at 5pm.

With the pandemic, naturally the Five O'Clock Club sadly came to a stop. However, we thought it would be a great idea to revive meeting up on a regular basis and would ask member businesses if they could offer their premises for Chamber members - as well as those who are thinking of joining - to come along for an enjoyable chat over a glass or two!

Tania Cook, the manager of the Bear of Burton very generously offered this lovely refurbished pub so that members could enjoy the location as well as having a catch up. Other members have come forward too, and it doesn't need to be a hospitality venue. If you have space for about 20 or so of us to relax over a glass of wine, we would be very pleased to hear from you.

So do come and join us at the Bear of Burton, 15 – 17 Salisbury Road, Burton BH23 7JG www.thebearofburton.co.uk for a glass or two of wine on Thursday 5th October at 5pm.

We really look forward to welcoming you.



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Tell us your news

Chamber Chat is all about Christchurch businesses small and large. If you are a Member of the Christchurch Chamber of Trade & Commerce and have business news you are happy to share, please do tell us.

If you are a new member and want to tell the rest of us about your business, then we look forward to hearing from you. Remember, Christchurch Chamber covers the whole of the old Borough and we welcome members from Hurn to Highcliffe and all places in between.

As well as being widely distributed electronically and on social media, this issue of Chamber Chat is being physically delivered free to businesses across Christchurch, Highcliffe, Somerford, Mundeford, Burton, Barrack Road, Fairmile and up to the airport. Its printing is paid for by its adverts—with any surplus funds going towards the Chambers future's activities.

If you would like to advertise in future editions, contact Sue Harmon-Smith on sueharmonsmith@gmail.com. Not only will you be supporting the Chamber, your advert will reach a targeted local business audience.

If you have a contribution you would like to make to the next edition, then contact me on andrew.barfield@gervis.co.uk.

Andy Barfield, Editor.

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Captain's Club all aboard Atlantic challenge

Two local business people are taking on the ultimate rowing challenge, and have partnered up with the Captain's Club Hotel and Spa who have offered sponsorship to the Ebb & Flow Rowing Team.

Julie Eddicott, of Ebb and Flow Wealth Ltd, together with Martin Stewart, owner of Stewarts Garden Centres, and Mary Sutherland, an experienced ocean rower plan to row across the Atlantic Ocean in 2024 or 2025.

"Corporate sponsors enable us to get to the start line," explains Julie. "It covers the cost of our survival kit and equipment we need on board to complete the challenge safely, and means that once we have that in place all the money we raise can go direct to our chosen charities. We already have around 10 local businesses on board, let's keep this momentum going."

"Captain's Club Hotel are great supporters of the local community and when Julie, an accomplished rower from our neighbouring Christchurch Rowing Club came to us to say she was entering the race, across the Atlantic Ocean and could we help her challenge with some sponsorship we agreed." says Tim Lloyd, MD of the Captain's Club Hotel and Spa.

Julie and Martin are looking for one more crew member for the World's Toughest Row, so if you are ever so slightly bonkers (Julie's words...!) or would like to follow their progress visit www.Ebbflowatlantic.com



Sacré bleu! Chris gets on his bike...to Paris

Christchurch businessman Chris Rice is swapping pizzas for pedals as he prepares for an endurance cycle ride all the way from London to Paris in just four days.

Together with three friends, Chris starts his epic journey on 13 September and has been training throughout the summer to prepare to cycle 80 miles a day from the UK to French capital cities. His target is to raise £2,500 for the charity Against Breast Cancer, and he's already raised well over £2000 with a few weeks to go! Together with his three friends they hope to raise a massive £10,000 between them.

"A massive thank you to everyone who has donated so far, I really appreciate it." grins Chris, owner of Soho in Church Street. "I am sure there will be a lot of puffing and moaning but between us we will get through the experience."

If you want to support Chris you can donate via

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/mamils4cancer>



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